

4314 a.

I intend to do my best to avoid bothering you with
technicalities, but there are just a few details which
I must call your attention to because unless we
bear them in mind we cannot understand properly
the way in which our familiar modern instrument
has been developed. We ~~must~~ ^{have to remember that} consider the
pianoforte simply and technically is a ~~stringed~~
stringed instrument which is played by hammers -
which hammers are not ~~for~~ used directly by the
hand, but set in motion by keys, which are
themselves to be played upon by the fingers -
you must take into consideration the fact that the
strings alone can with powerful blows to put them

in motion could not give us a good enough or full
enough tone to produce any sort of musical
impression - & this is one ~~case~~ of the most
important difficulties to be overcome in the
development of the instrument. The musical
instrument was only possible when a means of reinforcing
the sound produced by the strings was discovered.
and the application of the discovery was complicated
~~and~~ ^{by} the problem of bringing the machinery of the
hammers to bear upon the strings. The possibility
of reinforcing a sound was known practically a
very long while ago. though the ancients did not
understand the laws which governed the process.
We put it into technical language in modern
times by saying that the motion which is produced

2

in the air by the motion of a wire or piece of glass
or the human lip (as in trumpet. Horn & so
forth) or any other vibrating substance can be
taken up by more extensive substances such as
boards, or by columns of air in pipes and so
musical. is carried to a very extraordinary extent. A sound is
usually produced by something which wobbles to
and fro & and makes a little commotion of
the air in the air; and if this is strong enough
it is of its self regular musical sound - But
when it is not strong enough, under certain conditions
it can be reinforced by the sympathetic possibility
of other substances & can be made as powerful
instrument.

Illustration.

Of course people did not begin making these instruments
by reasoning about them - Most of them were probably
found at in their beginnings by accident and
improved upon in the course of many generations by
rule of thumb. I think you will be familiar
with the names of the ancient instruments
called the psaltery and the dulcimer - & these
were the simple prototypes of the modern pianoforte.
The dulcimer was its ^{most direct} ~~nearest~~ ancestor because
it was played with hammers, whereas the
psaltery was played with little quills or pieces
of ivory or some such substance fastened to
the fingers. The problem to be solved was of
course not so very difficult when the hammers
were held in the hands; because they were so

much more immediately under control. A good sharp
blow could be given with them, and there was
~~not~~ no danger of any player in his senses being
bothered with the difficulty which machinery entailed,
of the hammer's not coming away from the string
quick enough to allow it to vibrate ~~freely~~ freely.

The declension was in fact nothing more in principle
than a hollow ^{plate} trapeze shaped box with strings
~~fastened~~ ^{strung} across it; which was kept free from the
surface by bridges which served at the same
time to carry the ~~full~~ vibrations of the strings to
the box which reinforced the sound, just as
the body of a violin or the sound board of
a pianoforte does ~~now~~ ~~at~~ nowadays. The
psaltery was constructed much in the same way, but

as I have said it differed in the way it was
played by the so called plectrum - We cannot
tell who first began to try to put keys
to an instrument of either of these descriptions.
We find mention of instruments which must have
had keys of some sort a long while before any
of the instruments which are still in existence.

The first name which appears to be traceable is
the clavicord or ~~clavicymbalum~~; which ~~means~~
~~has been a stringed instrument~~ is obviously derived
from "clavis" a key and "chorde" a string - and
such instruments are mentioned as early as 1400.

The ^{name} clavicord came to be applied later especially
to a special instrument which was distinguished
from the harpsichord or spinet by the way in which
the strings were set in motion; and these two names

clavichord & harpsichord will send to bring us,
at once tolerably close to the pianoforte itself.

The clavichord was the instrument in which the strings
were set in motion by little upright pieces of wood
called tangents; ~~which did not exactly give a blow~~
~~to the string~~, but these were fixed at the
opposite end of each key from the part which
was struck by the finger, and as the long piece
of wood set like a see-saw on its middle
was pressed down by the finger at one end the
other end rose & the little tangent gave a
sort of gentle push rather than a blow to the
string and produced a very pleasant and attractive
kind of sound. In the harpsichord on the other
hand the string was set in motion by plucking
more like the plectrum of the lute in the psaltery

and produced a very different kind of sound.
Now these two instruments were developed more or
less side by side, and ~~since then~~ served to
our ancestors the purpose which the pianoforte
does to us. The ~~old~~ name by which such
instruments were known in England was Virginals;
and it is worth mentioning that Queen Elizabeth
was considered a very good performer on them;
and we guess by inference that Mary Queen of
Scots was no bad performer on them. But
the music devised for them in those early days
was not such as I can hope would give
you much satisfaction. There are ^{still in existence} some collections
of ^{the} music ~~still in existence~~ which ~~was~~ were written for
them, which are very interesting to the students of
Musical history, & ~~the~~ Musical archaeologists generally.

5
but it wants a certain amount of special training and
experience to get any satisfaction ~~of~~ out of it.
Such volumes are the Virginal book of Queen
Elizabeth's ~~and~~ which is in the Fitzwilliam Museum
at Cambridge, and Lady Neville's Virginal book
and the Parthenia, which between them contain
~~are~~ in my large collection of works by some of the
greatest of our English composers such as Bird
& Tallis, & Byrd, & Bull & ~~Blow~~ & Gibbons.
And in those days Englishmen were well to the
fore in Musical art. Now their instrument

had such special drawbacks. The clavichord
was exceedingly soft in tone. So soft indeed
that if it was played here you would almost
have to hold your breath to hear it at
all at the other end of the room. It was known

a most expressive instrument, & even in some ways
more expressive than the pianoforte. & hence it was
specially delighted in by some of the greatest of
Musicians; specially John Sebastian Bach & his
famous son Philip Emanuel Bach. The harpsichord
was on the other hand a literally powerful instrument
but it was almost entirely incapable of direct
expression. You could not vary the power of
tone - Whether you hit the keys hard or
soft it made no difference. At least all
the difference it could make would be that if
you hit ~~it~~ ^{the harpsichord} as modern players hit the pianoforte
you would displace the little jacks as they were
called which plucked the strings, and consequently
in a short time instead of getting more sound you
would fail to get any sound at all. These
two instruments had distinct followers in different countries.

The Germans for the most part liked the tender
expression Clarichord best, while Italians & Frenchmen
and Englishmen liked the rather noisy harpsichord.
In those days Italians and French had rather the
hand in instrumental music, & so it came to
pass that the music which is best appreciated
by us comes first from France & Italy.
~~The~~ I don't think it will be any use to bother you
with lots of barren names; so I will confine
myself as much as possible to composers we
can make a little practical acquaintance with.
The first I will trouble you with is Couperin;
who was harpsichord player to Louis XIV of France
sometimes called Louis the hand or feet. This
Couperin must certainly have been a very excellent
performer, & what is most important from our point

of view he understood the nature & requirements
of his instrument extremely well. The Music he
wrote was after the fashion of those days chiefly
Sonatas; which is another name for sets of
dance tunes; and similar little pieces. Our
modern Sonata had hardly yet begun to be
invented, & the type of expressive pianoforte piece
so familiar to us was as yet a "it" was only
occasionally struck upon by accident. Even such
things as tunes were hardly recognized in high
class music; and when they appeared they seem-
ed to set a peculiar mark upon the Composer. I
propose to try and play to you a little piece out
of one of these Suites of Composers, which is rather
unusually beautiful for the time in which it was written.
And you must be so kind as to remember that it